

**REMARKS**

This is a response to the Final Office Action mailed July 10, 2008. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

**I. Status of Claims**

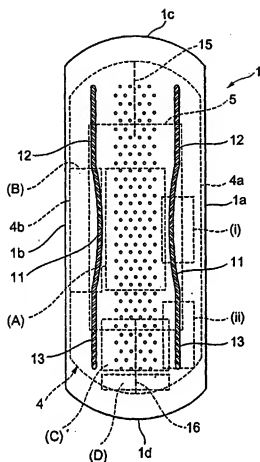
Claims 1-6 are pending. Claim 2 is canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 1 and 3 are amended, and claim 3 is amended to depend from claim 1. No new matter has been added.

**II. Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102**

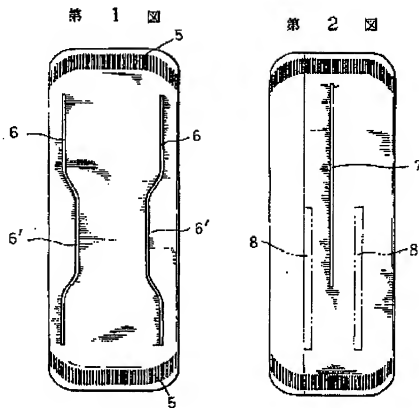
Claims 1-3 and 6 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by unexamined Japanese Patent Publication JP-H03-33622 ("JP '622"). Claims 1 and 4-5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Japanese Patent Publication JP-10-328233 ("JP '233"). Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Applicants amend claim 1 to incorporate the limitations of dependent claim 2. Therefore, claim 1 now requires an absorbent article having both a rear flexible portion 16 and a front flexible portion 15, wherein at least a portion of both the front and the rear flexible portion is located between the compressed grooves 11. See Applicants' Figure 5 below:

**Fig. 5**



With respect to previously pending claims 1 and 2 (now amended claim 1), the Examiner contends that JP '622 discloses an absorbent article that anticipates the claimed invention. Specifically, the Examiner states that JP '622 discloses an absorbent article having compressed grooves, a rear flexible portion, and a front flexible portion. See Figures 1 and 2 of JP '622, below:

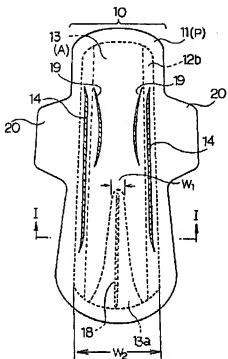


Applicants respectfully disagree. JP '622 discloses an absorbent article having compressed grooves 6 on the body side surface of the article and a compressed groove 7 on the backside of the article that extends rearwardly from the center of the article. The compressed groove 7 provides flexibility to the article, and is therefore similar to Applicants' claimed rear flexible portion 16 in that respect. However, Applicants respectfully submit that JP '622 does not disclose a front flexible portion, wherein the front flexible portion extends toward a front end edge of the article from a starting point that is located closer to the front end edge than the lateral reference line, as required in amended claim 1.

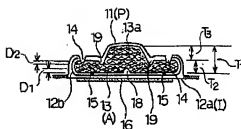
Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that JP '622 fails to disclose all of the claimed features of the invention as claimed in claim 1, and therefore does not anticipate amended claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 is in condition for allowance and request that the rejection of claim 1 be withdrawn. Applicants further submit that claims 3 and 6 depend from allowable claim 1, and are therefore also allowable, for at least this reason.

With respect to claims 1, 4 and 5, the Examiner contends that JP '233 discloses all of the claimed features of the invention, and therefore anticipates the claimed invention. JP '233 discloses an absorbent article with compressed grooves 14 and a rearward groove 18, as shown in Figures 1 and 2, below:

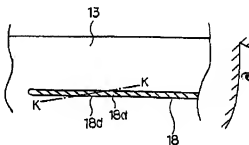
【図 1】



【図 2】



【図 3】



Applicants respectfully submit that JP '233 fails to disclose all of the features of the invention, as claimed in amended claim 1. JP '233 does not disclose a front flexible portion, wherein the front flexible portion extends toward a front end edge of the article from a starting point that is located closer to the front end edge than the lateral reference line, as required in amended claim 1.

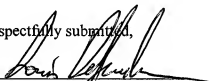
Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that claim 1 is in condition for allowance and request that the rejection of claim 1 be withdrawn. Applicants further submit that claims 4 and 5 depend from allowable claim 1, and are therefore also allowable, for at least this reason.

**CONCLUSION**

Reconsideration of the pending claims in view of the above amendments and remarks is respectfully requested. It is believed that the present amendments are in compliance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 since no new searching is necessary, and the present amendments are believed to place the claims in condition for allowance.

If there are any remaining issues which the Examiner believes could be resolved through either a Supplemental Response or an Examiner's Amendment, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned at the telephone number indicated below.

Dated: October 10, 2008

Respectfully submitted,  
  
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